Assessing Women’s Cervical Cancer Burdens, Knowledge, and Attitudes in Central Uganda

Danielle Savino¹, Simon Kasasa², Kavanya Gray¹, Ronald Anguzu¹, Brenda Tendo², Harriet Babikako¹, Kirsten Beyer²
¹Medical College of Wisconsin, ²Makerere University

Introduction

- Cervical cancer rates have declined significantly in industrialized countries in recent years, but the disease remains a leading cause of cancer-related mortality for women in Uganda (Nakisige C., 2017).
- Preventative measures such as screening exams and vaccinations reduce cervical cancer risk; understanding Ugandan women's knowledge and attitudes towards these practices is necessary to promote effective services (Nakisige C., 2017; Nawagi F., 2017).

Study Aims

- To assess women’s perceptions and awareness of cervical cancer risks in Kyadondo County, Uganda.

Methods

- This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at both Makerere University and the Medical College of Wisconsin.
- This study was conducted from June-August 2018, in the Kampala district in the central region of Uganda, at the Child and Family Foundation of Uganda (CFU).
- The study used a previously verified cross-sectional questionnaire, offered in English and Luganda.
- The questionnaire was administered orally by a study team member and the associated discussion was audio recorded.
- Based on participant responses and discussions, trends were extrapolated from the data.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Participant Statement, N=39</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral (Don’t Know)</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am at risk of getting cervical cancer</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women who have had sexually transmitted diseases are more likely to get cervical cancer</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cervical cancer is a death sentence for most people</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is little a woman can do to reduce her risk of getting cervical cancer</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women who have cervical cancer will have some kind of symptoms showing it</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

- A total of 39 women participated in the study, with the average age being 28.7.
- All of the women had heard of cancer, however a small proportion (n=3, 7.7%) had never heard of cervical cancer and only 6 (15.4%) women had been previously screened.
- The women who had not heard of cervical cancer were referred to the CFU from field healthcare workers, and had not visited a free healthcare clinic previously.
- Nearly half of the women (n=16, 47.2%) did not know if there was a vaccination that could prevent cervical cancer.
- A majority of women (n=29, 74.4%) indicated that they would vaccinate themselves against cervical cancer, and those who did not know or want a vaccination feared expired vaccines and adverse events.
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Conclusion

- Women attending healthcare clinic in Kampala indicated strong general knowledge of the risk of cervical cancer but were unaware of many screening and preventative measures.
- There is an overall positive attitude towards learning about cervical cancer although fear, misinformation, and lack of resources constrain women's health care seeking behavior.
- Efforts should be made to educate women in these communities and promote access to available resources.
- Future research aims to expand the study population to include women from other areas of the Kampala region.

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